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FM AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5480
HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
INFO USDAO SUVA FJ
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY

UNCLAS PORT MORESBY 000058

DEPT FOR EAP/ANP AND EAP/RSP
DEPT FOR PM/WRA CHARLES STONECIPHER
USPACOM/J53 FOR BILL SCHWAB

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PARM](#) [MASS](#) [OPDC](#) [PP](#)

SUBJECT: PAPUA NEW GUINEA REQUESTS USG ASSISTANCE IN DISPOSING OF
WWII WEAPONS AND MUNITIONS

¶1. Summary and Action Request: Embassy has received a request from Papua New Guinea Prime Minister Somare for USG assistance in cleaning up unexploded ordnance and other WWII debris in and around the island of Bougainville. We request Department's assistance in responding to the request, and suggest coordination with the Government of Australia and appropriate UN agencies. Text of PM Somare's letter follows para. 3 below. End Summary and Action Request.

Background

¶2. The area around Papua New Guinea's island of Bougainville is littered with aging weapons and munitions left over from World War II, especially around the community of Torokina. This debris, much of it old weapons, bombs and other unexploded ordnance, presents a significant danger to the people of Bougainville. Local residents have inadvertently detonated several of these devices over the years, leading to death and serious injury. The debris is also unsightly, hindering development of tourism and agriculture.

¶3. These weapons continue to surface. Some of the weapons and explosive devices have found their way into the hands of insurgents on both sides in the recent and bloody conflict on Bougainville, exacerbating the violence and disturbing the Government. We are sending a report on the conflict SEPTEL.

¶4. The Ambassador has been approached about this issue by various officials, including the President of Bougainville. On April 8, we received the following official request from the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea.

BEGIN TEXT OF PM SOMARE'S LETTER

6 April 2009

H.E. Ms Leslie Rowe
Ambassador
Embassy of the United States of America
PO Box 1492
Port Moresby NCD 121

Your Excellency

I have been approached by the President of the ABG [Autonomous Bougainville Government] to request your assistance to see if your Government would be able to assist with the disposal of World War 2 bombs, explosive devices and other ammunitions. I am advised by the President of the ABG that he has already had discussions on this matter with you and the Australian High Commissioner.

The use of these surplus materials by individuals intending to disrupt the peace process on Bougainville is of real concern to

the National Government and the sooner we rid them from the
Island of Bougainville the better it is for the peace process.

I would be grateful if you could seek the kind understanding of
your Government to agree to an arrangement with my relevant
authorities here in Papua New Guinea to remove this source of
threat to the peace process.

Yours sincerely

//signed//

M T SOMARE GCL GCMG CH CF KStJ

END TEXT OF PM SOMARE'S LETTER.

ROWE